



Committee On Finance

Max Baucus, Ranking Member

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Baucus Heads to WTO Ministerial, Key Trade Issues at Stake

(Washington, D.C.) U.S. Senator Max Baucus, Ranking Member of Senate Finance Committee, departs tomorrow to attend the World Trade Organization (WTO) Ministerial Meeting in Mexico.

The WTO sets and enforces international trade rules for nearly 150 member countries. Within the WTO, countries negotiate to lower trade barriers and level the playing field for trade. The current Doha Round of trade negotiations began in November 2001 and is scheduled to conclude at the end of 2005.

Baucus will be the most senior member of the Senate Finance Committee participating in the Ministerial. The Finance Committee is responsible for setting international trade policy. Baucus today emphasized the need for U.S. representatives to remain focused on moving forward with important negotiations, while not making unnecessary or unwarranted concessions.

"This Ministerial Meeting is a critical step toward a final agreement," Baucus said. "We need to see some movement -- particularly from the European Union -- on key issues. At the same time, we must focus on the end goal, which is a good agreement. We shouldn't be unilaterally conceding issue for the sake of a good meeting.

"Since the Round began two years ago, we have made some important progress -- but much more work must be done if we want these negotiations to bring significant commercial gains for American farmers, workers, and businesses," Baucus added.

While attending the WTO meetings, Baucus plans to meet with delegations from a number of countries, including Mexico, China, and the Middle East, to press important trade priorities.

"A lot is at stake in the WTO. In the key area of agriculture, we need to guard against backsliding from the United States' goals of true market reform and real gains in market access. On industrial goods and services, we need to push for the greatest possible degree of trade liberalization. We need to stand firm against efforts to water down WTO protections for science-based food safety rules, intellectual property rights, and trade remedies.

"This WTO meeting is a critical opportunity to energize efforts to expand international trade," said Baucus. "As Ranking Member of the Senate Finance Committee, I'll be there to make sure that the interests of Montana and of the nation are reflected in the outcome."

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